10th Annual Harvard Pow Wow
QRAC Gym
6 Garden St., in the Quad.
1:00 pm - 7:00 pm

Participants

Pow Wow MC - Justin Beatty, Anishinaabe

Head Man Dancer - Jonathan Perry, Aquinnah Wampanoag.
Head Lady Dancer - Siobhan Wescott, Alaska Native [HMS]

Host Northern Drum - Mystic River, CT,
Host Southern Drum - Silvercloud, NYC
(Both drum groups have members from MA, CT, and ME tribes)

Organized by HUNSA (Harvard University Native Students Association)

History of Pow Wows

Pow wows as we know them are not native to the indigenous peoples of New England even though the term “Pow wow” or pau wau first appeared in Edward Winslow’s “Good News from New England” (1624). According to Winslow, the Narraganset, Wampanoag, and
Pequot revered the “office and dutie of the Powah [that] is to be exercised principally in calling upon the Deuill.” Later eighteenth-century European traders misinterpreted the ceremony of medicine men or pau wau’s dancing, thinking all Native peoples gathered to sing and dance in this manner.

In their modern form, Pow wows have become a pan-Indian tradition celebrated throughout the year, in cities, towns, suburbs, villages, and reservations far beyond the Great Plains of their origin. The modern Pow wow is a time for renewing old friendships, making new ones, dancing, singing, eating “frybread” (Plains), or Indian Tacos (Southwest), and plain-old hanging out.

The modern day Pow Wow evolved from the Great Plains Grass Dance Societies that formed during the early 1800's. The dances were an opportunity for warriors to re-enact their brave deeds for all the members of the tribe to witness. However, in the aftermath of war, removal, and the establishment of the reservation system in the 1880s, the United States also outlawed the customs and religions of the Native peoples of the Great Plains. The Grass Dance was one of the very few celebrations permitted and thus, became an opportunity to maintain those traditional customs that were otherwise outlawed. As other tribal communities were invited to these celebrations, rights of ownership of sacred items necessary to the Grass Dance were formally transferred from one tribe to another. As various tribes gathered together, they would share their songs, often changing the songs so singers of different tribes could join. With these changes came the use of "vocables" to replace the words of the old songs. Thus, some songs today are sung in vocables without words. Songs are of many varieties, from religious to war to social. Gift-giving and displays of generosity were also integral aspects of these early festivities, as they are today.

In the modern-day Pow Wow, we are witness to centuries of tradition and invention. If anything, Pow wows symbolize the revival and vitality of American Indian peoples of the late twentieth century. Pow wows became increasingly popular in the decade between the post-WWII years and the 1950s when the U.S. relocated thousands of American Indians during the era of Termination. Terminated as “Indians” and relocated to the urban meccas of the U.S., Indian people congregated at inter-tribal Pow wows to re-establish kin, clan, and tribal ties, forge new networks, and meet their needs as “urban Indians.” The Red Power movement of the 1960s added greater urgency still to those who, meeting people from different tribes and nations and in newer contexts, now saw themselves as sharing a historic and cultural identity. While it would be easier to view Pow wows as relics of an ancient, sacred tradition, the
modern Pow Wow retains its traditional roots while incorporating the inheritances and inventions of an ever-changing world.

**So, what happens at a Pow Wow anyway?**

Pow wows always begin with the Grand Entry. Grand Entry Dancers (Head Man, Head Lady) lead all the Intertribal and Social dances throughout the day. The Grand Entry is a vestige of the parades that preceded the Pow wows of the early twentieth century. During the Grand Entry, everyone is asked to stand as flags are brought into the arena. Generally, the flags carried are tribal/national flags, the U.S. flag, the flags of other participating nations, the POW flag, and eagle staffs of various tribes present. Native veterans carry the last two. The U.S. flag is always given a place of honor despite our contested histories. Doing so serves multiple functions: It is a way to remember our ancestors that fought against the U.S. It acknowledges the reality of our relationship to the U.S., a country of which American Indians are a part. Moreover, the flag reminds both Native and non-Native people that American Indians fought and died for the U.S.

Following the veterans, important guests including tribal leaders, Pow wow Princesses, elders, and Pow Wow organizers lead the line of men dancers. Women dancers always follow the men. Once everyone is in the arena, a flag song is sung, then a victory song to honor the flag and veterans. Opening prayers are offered in a Native language or in English. Spectators remain standing and remove their hats during the prayer. After the prayer, the opening song starts the Pow Wow.

**Dancers**

Dancers participate in four separate categories:

**Men's Traditional** dancers are seen as preservers of the traditional ways and are recognizable by their double eagle feather bustles and high kicking steps.
Men’s Fancy dancers are notable for their sliding, shaking, and spinning motions similar to long grass blowing in the wind. Their colorful regalia easily mark them as the flashiest and most nimble of dancers.

Women's Traditional dancers are seen as preservers of the traditional ways. They dance in a stately and poised manner, moving slowly and gracefully to the beat of the drum. They dress in elaborately decorated regalia with Eagle plumes worn on the back of the head and an Eagle fan in the right hand.

Women's Fancy dancers wear long, graceful fringed shawls draped over the shoulders. Their twirling rapid dance steps compliment the flaring shawls. Women's Jingle dancing originated with the Objibwa Nation and is recognized as a healing dance. The dress is covered with tin cones (made from snuff tin covers) and bouncy dance steps create rhythmic jingling in time of the beat of the drum.

Etiquette

- Pictures should never be taken during Flag, Prayer, and Honor Songs, or when an individual is honoring a drum through a whistle.
- Never crowd around the drummers.
- All Pow Wow Festivals, no matter where they are held are Alcohol and Drug Free.
- Enjoy yourself and have a great time.

For further information about the 8th Annual Harvard Pow wow, please contact:

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